



66 *Wine is a visual and a lifestyle reminder for me to keep things in perspective.”*

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Varietals on View

A good wine collection is not just a part of a connoisseur’s lifestyle—it looks great in storage, too.

Written by Lisa Waterman Gray | Photos by Brynn Burns

Wine rooms are today’s must-have amenity. Builders are setting aside dedicated space for these rooms of racks, as seen on a recent Parade of Homes Tour sponsored by the Home Builders Association (HBA) of Greater Kansas City. From compact closets to dedicated glass-walled rooms, with or without seating, wine rooms can be customized to suit any design style or size of collection, allowing homeowners to appreciate the slow maturation process of premium wines.

When glass wine bottles and corks first paired up in the 1600s, wine storage began in earnest. Although most of today’s wine does not require aging for optimal flavor, other vintages transform with increased time in the bottle, as their texture, flavor and aroma evolve. Some vintages achieve peak flavor within several years, while others benefit from decades of storage.

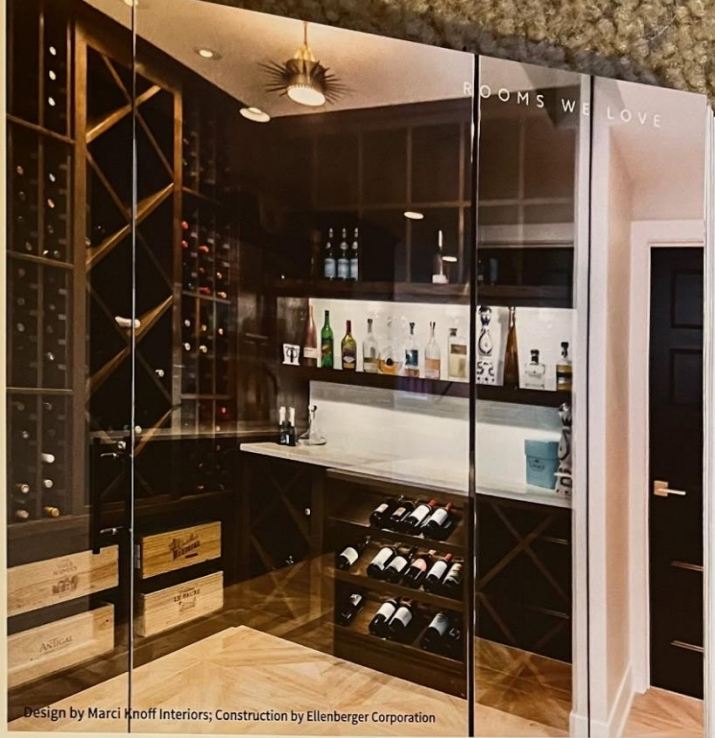
For large cellars, a wine cooling system is especially helpful. In an active storage area, a mechanical device typically maintains the temperature at about 55 degrees Fahrenheit. For passive cellaring, the wine room temperature naturally shifts with changing seasons. Adding appropriate insulation can help stabilize the temperature while providing a good vapor barrier.

Most wine should store well in any area of the house as long as it is away from direct sunlight. In some cases, installing a dedicated humidifier is necessary to produce the freshest wines, at humidity levels between 70 and 80 percent.

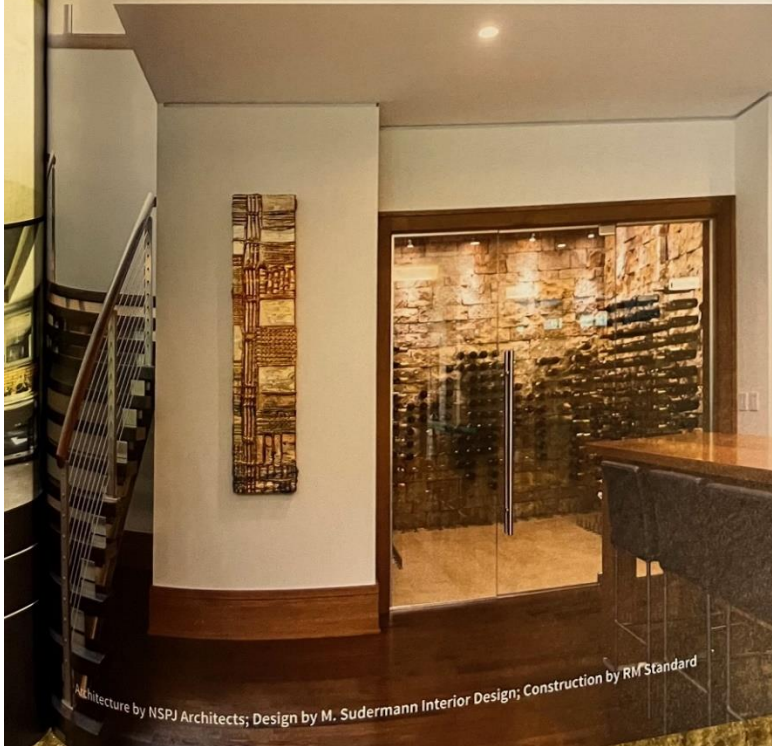
FUN STYLE AND FUNCTION

On the lower level of this Prairie Village home (seen right), a fully equipped entertainment area draws the homeowners down to enjoy a colorful seating area, bar and wine room. A floor-to-ceiling glass door seals off 350 bottles of wine.

"The location of this basement wine room needed to be close to the dedicated cooling unit," explains interior designer Marci Knoff. "We used a shower glass system with weather stripping to keep cold air in."



Design by Marci Knoff Interiors; Construction by Ellenberger Corporation



Architecture by NSPJ Architects; Design by M. Sudermann Interior Design; Construction by RM Standard

This is probably the tenth wine room Marci has designed in the last 10 years. "It's now a component of half the projects I'm involved with," she says.

A wine consultant hired by the homeowners created an initial design for this compact storage space, then Marci reviewed her clients' individual needs before choosing cabinetry, lighting and door design. She selected ceramic tile for the floor, along with a quartz countertop and backsplash for easy care, and plenty of lighting to read the labels. Wood cabinetry gives it a more traditional setting.

STONE COLD STORAGE

Contemporary notions meet classic Prairie-style details in this expansive wine room (seen left) designed by now-retired architect Rick Jones of NSPJ Architects. It features three floor-to-ceiling hand-cut stone walls and a hanging rack system that nearly disappears into the background so that up to 1,000 bottles appear to float midair. Glass panels provide unobstructed views of the room from the expansive lower-



The vertical supports were laser-measured and hand-screwed in place.
 "When you step away, you only see wine," the homeowner says.

ROOMS WE LOVE

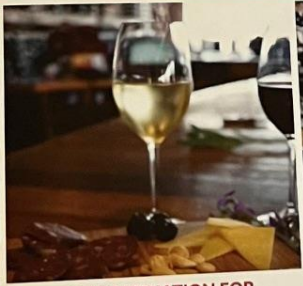
level entertainment area, which includes a golf simulator/theater, two custom ping-pong tables, a bar and a walkout patio.

"Because I wanted to be able to find a bottle that looked good to guests, I didn't want it hidden away somewhere," says the homeowner. "I love to be able to care for people when they come over to visit, so I like to have a variety of wine offerings."

Hidden in a corner, an individual cooling unit maintains a constant temperature of 55 degrees. The room's location is tucked into the earth, which assists in maintaining an even temperature. In addition, the entire house has good air conditioning and humidity control.

"All of us need things in life to provide a respite from the pace of the world, a reminder to slow down a little bit," the homeowner notes. "Wine is a visual and a lifestyle reminder for me to keep things in perspective. There's something quieting and calming about taking the time to have a glass of wine." ①

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